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Voluntary Public

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Morocco

Post: Rabat

FAS Rabat Helped Keep U.S. Dairy Exports to Morocco Uninterrupted

Report Categories:

Export Accomplishments - Other

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Report Highlights:

FAS Rabat helped the release of a U.S. shipment of butter that was rejected by the Moroccan regulatory authorities because of a newly required sanitary certificate. Although the new certificate has not been negotiated or agreed upon by the relevant USDA agencies, Morocco has started to implement the new import requirements. FAS Rabat has successfully worked with the Moroccan authorities to maintain the important U.S. dairy export market in Morocco uninterrupted, and is currently coordinating its efforts with USDA/W to reach an agreement on a new sanitary certificate for U.S. dairy exports to Morocco.

On March 25, the Office of Agricultural Affairs (OAA/FAS) in Rabat was informed by a U.S. dairy product exporter (INTERFOOD Inc. in Waltham, MA) that a shipment of two containers of butter to Morocco has been rejected by the Moroccan regulatory authority. The reason for the rejection, according to the Moroccan import clearing office, was that the butter shipment did not have a newly required sanitary certificate that should be issued by USDA. The OAA contacted the National Office of Food Safety (ONSSA) which is responsible for the inspection and clearance of dairy products at the port of entry to request an explanation for rejecting the shipment and asked for its immediate release. ONSSA official informed us that all shipments of dairy products must now be accompanied by this new sanitary certificate, an argument that we contested given that the new certificate and its import requirements have not been discussed or agreed by the relevant U.S. regulatory agencies. We informed ONSSA that U.S. dairy exports to Morocco must remain uninterrupted and they should be allowed entry with the old sanitary certificate until a new certificate for U.S. dairy products is negotiated and agreed upon by USDA and ONSSA.

On March 29, the Moroccan authorities released the butter shipment to the delight of the Moroccan importer and INTERFOOD. ONSSA has indicated that they will maintain U.S. dairy exports to Morocco uninterrupted for the time being with the old certificate, but they will need to have the new certificate approved by USDA very soon.

A copy of the new Moroccan sanitary certificate, with its English translation, has been forwarded by FAS Rabat to the relevant USDA agencies in order to start the negotiation process with ONSSA to establish an agreed certificate and to avoid future disruption of U.S. dairy exports to Morocco. In 2010, U.S. dairy exports to Morocco were estimated at \$65 million, accounting for 8.5 percent of total U.S. agricultural and food exports in that year. Since the start of the U.S.-Morocco FTA implementation in 2006, U.S. dairy product exports to Morocco have greatly benefited from the preferential access provided under the agreement and grew drastically from a non-existence level of \$64,000 in 2005.